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Aloha, my name is Steve Morgan. I am a religious Jew and a member of the Conservative Jewish movement, one of the largest Jewish movements world wide, as well as being a member of Sof Ma'arav Jewish Congregation here on Oahu.

As you are possibly aware of Observant Jews rely upon a diet of what is referred to as "Kosher". This is a religious practice that in which its bases is found in the Hebrew Bible and has been observed for over 3000 years.

One of the more well-known restrictions of kosher is the injunction against mixing meat with dairy products. When describing meat, this refers to any animal part regardless of size including insects, even those unseen to the naked eye if indeed they can be detected. Not only do most Jews who observe kosher avoid eating meat and milk products together, everything these foods touch must be kept completely separate. A fully kosher household, for example, might have two or more different sets of plates, tableware, cooking ware and even two sinks for preparing and serving meat dishes separate from dairy-based dishes. My point being that this idea of separation is extremely important to observant Jews.

A growing problem within the Jewish community is how does one organize a kosher kitchen and maintain this type of separation, when so much of the food in the grocery store now contains GMOs? Corn and soy, the two major US crops, are the bases of much of our processed food diet, yet are genetically mixed with *Bacillus Thuringiensis* or Bt which is a bacteria. Bacteria is animal, not vegetable. As you can see attempting to keep this basic law of separation quickly becomes confusing. What was once recognized as plant based food is no longer just plant based.

An even broader Jewish law and straight to the point is known as *kilayim*, the prohibition of mixing different species of animals and plants. Clearly the aforementioned of mixing BT into corn would fall into this category as would other applications of genetically modified foods.

I realize that these laws can seem unusual to someone who does not observe them and certainly there is no expectation for those who are not Jewish to keep such laws. All that many are asking within the Jewish community is to identify genetically modified products so that we can keep these religious laws that are very important to us, as were kept by our ancestors for the last three and a half thousand years. The more we know about what is in our food products the better choices we can make. Unfortunately what happens to many Jews when there is doubt is that entire food groups are often avoided.

The position I present today is not just on my own behalf but also with the support of Rabbis David Glickman and Rabbi Mel Libman, two prominent Rabbis here in Hawaii representing the two Jewish movements most affected by the GMO issue. Rabbi Libman is the sole Rabbi for the Conservative Jewish movement here in Hawaii and Rabbi Glickman is of the Orthodox movement and Rabbi for Congregation Bet Shalom. Both Rabbis strongly support the labeling of Food products containing genetically modified materials.

Furthermore, this essence of conscious extends beyond the Jewish community as there are those who keep strict vegan diets as well as those who feel a sense of conscious in regard to genetic breeding. This sentiment is found among many in the Hawaiian culture as well.

I conclude with this 'olelo no'eau-

"E kaupe aku no i ka hoe ako mae"

Together with your help we can move forward with this mission of labeling GMO's in Hawaii. Please support Resolution 12-57

Mahalo,

Steve Morgan

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